



BOBBY JINDAL
GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
Governor's Office of Homeland Security
and
Emergency Preparedness

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PRESS RELEASE

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STATE ASSISTING AS SALTWATER INTRUSION CAUSES PROBLEMS ***VERMILION DECLARES PARISH EMERGENCY***

BATON ROUGE (November 29, 2011) – Today, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) Chairman Garret Graves and Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) Interim Director Pat Santos announced they are increasing efforts to combat saltwater intrusion in Vermilion Parish. Those efforts include urging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to expedite repairs of Leland Bowman Locks and evaluate options for a temporary saltwater barrier, working with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) to provide farmers support for damaged crops, and working with local officials to find additional short and long term solutions for protecting the area.

The cause of saltwater intrusion in the Mermentau Basin is largely attributable to drought conditions in the upper basin and damage to the Leland Bowman Locks on Freshwater Bayou. GOHSEP has contacted the Corps of Engineers about repairing the locks. The locks help prevent saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico from entering Southwest Louisiana.

Interim GOHSEP Director Pat Santos said, "We wanted to make sure the people of Vermilion Parish get relief as soon as possible – and that's why we reached out to the Corps of Engineers to see what could be done to move repairs along even faster, as well as explore other options for a temporary saltwater barrier. We'll continue to work with local officials, state partners and the Corps to make sure all options for protecting coastal Vermilion are on the table, so we can help get these folks back on their feet."

"Governor Jindal took action in September to proactively address what he saw as a growing drought and saltwater intrusion problem," said Garret Graves, chairman of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA). "In September, the Governor sent a letter to USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack requesting federal assistance for farmers impacted by the drought conditions. As a result, farmers are eligible for emergency loans and Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments through June of 2012. We will continue working with LDAF, USDA, the Corps of Engineers and federal agencies to help farmers in Southwest Louisiana"

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